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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 USNATO 000299

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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: READOUT: AUGUST 20 NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL MEETING

Classified By: CDA: Walter S. Reid for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C/NF) Summary: At the North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting on Wednesday, August 20, Allies extensively discussed the new NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) and the appropriate course to take regarding relations with Russia. Deputy Secretary General (DSYG) Bisogniero observed that the NATO ministerial statement had been particularly appropriate given the Russian failure to withdraw from Georgia. Allies demonstrated a sense of urgency on the NGC, but also want to "do things (read the NGC charter) well." DSYG suggested that Special Envoy Simmons gather the views of the Georgians on the NGC during his upcoming trip to Georgia and report them to the August 27 NAC. At that stage PermReps would be in a position to decide on the potential drafting of a charter, and the timing of the first meeting.

12. (C/NF) Summary of Other Topics: Afghanistan: The Operations brief updated the Council on the recent attack near Kabul, the situation in Pakistan, and the continuing operations to secure areas and retain freedom of movement throughout Afghanistan. Highway security was presented as the highest ISAF priority. Several PermReps requested analysis and further discussions on the potential change in OMF strategy shown in recent large-scale attacks. Kosovo: The Deputy Secretary (DSYG) welcomed the UNMIK-EULEX asset transfer agreement signed on 18 August, but warned that KFOR needs to be vigilant in event of a policing gap. MGEN Li Gobbi called for Allies to provide more manpower and funds for KFOR to fulfill its new tasks. Africa: The African Union's request for continued airlift support to AMISOM passed silence, authorizing a six-month extension of support until February 2009. There was no discussion of Iraq. End Summary.

Georgia and Relations with Russia

13. (C) DSYG Bisogniero shared that the SYG had tasked SRSYG Bob Simmons to supervise the implementation of NATO's seven-point response to the Georgian request for assistance. In that capacity Simmons planned to convene an August 20 meeting with all relevant NATO divisions to begin

implementation of the package. Immediately after that meeting Simmons planned to fly to Tbilisi for consultations with the Georgian government, where he would raise the issue of the new NGC. Both the United States and Germany praised the speed of IS work on the assistance package and for the planned quick departure of Bob Simmons and the assessment team.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Volker proposed that the new NGC should meet during the next week, to begin to define and implement its new role. The Ambassador hoped there could be at least two meetings before the September 15-16 NAC trip to Georgia, and that the NGC should meet in Tbilisi during that visit. He suggested as food for thought that the NGC should have a charter, including provision for regular meetings and oversight of assistance to Georgia. Norway, Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, the Czech Republic and the UK supported the idea of signing a NGC charter in Tbilisi during the NAC visit.

¶5. (C) The Netherlands liked the idea of a meeting in Tbilisi. However, the Dutch PermRep also thought that a charter should not be drafted because, in his opinion, it went beyond the ministerial tasking to the PermReps. Spain expressed skepticism about the advisability of hearing Georgia's ideas for the NGC, claiming that NATO would be asking Tbilisi to interpret the ministerial tasking. German PermRep Brandenburg believed that the NGC itself remains just an offer to the Georgian side, and suggested the drafting of a charter could take as long as the three months it had taken to agree the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) Charter. Canada

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countered this, suggesting that building on relevant NUC language could cut the negotiation time significantly.

¶6. (C/NF) Ambassador Volker drew nods from around the room when suggesting that the NAC refocus its visit in light of recent events, and should adopt a higher profile in the area of humanitarian assistance. Norway and Bulgaria explicitly supported a humanitarian emphasis during the visit. Bulgaria expressed support for fulfilling Georgia's unanswered requests and any future requests in the pipeline. (NOTE: Georgia has since requested NATO demining assistance. END NOTE)

¶7. (C) The Chairman of the Military Committee CMC briefed that there had been no sign of a Russian withdrawal. Instead, he said, the Russians had expanded their operational zones in some areas. Russian forces had re-entered the port of Poti, scuttled a Georgian ship, taken prisoner the Georgian forces that had opposed them, and seized five U.S. Humvees that were in the port for shipment following an exercise. The CMC also indicated that Russian armor had blockaded the Sachere mountain training base, which currently holds about 400 Georgian personnel comprised of units that had retreated from Abkhazia and Senaki, as well as the training staff. The CMC assessed that the Georgian military remains essentially combat ineffective, and noted that he had heard Russian claims that they will begin withdrawal over the next three days.

¶8. (C) France reported that the PSC met on August 19 and had decided to reinforce the EU representation in Georgia. Belgian PermRep van Daele briefed that a new French draft UNSCR circulated to all UNSC and EU members will not be used for a few days, to see if the Russians begin to withdraw.

NATO Relations with Russia

¶9. (C/NF) Allies agreed to task the Political Committee (PC) to begin deliberations on the status of the NATO Russia Council (NRC) bodies and upcoming NRC events in light of the Ministerial decision. Allies divided sharply on the question of an NRC Ambassadorial; France, Spain, Germany, Greece, and

Norway advocated keeping the dialogue with Russia open. Spain said we should keep open the political dialogue with Russia because we now have a common position towards Russia and Norway did not want to isolate Russia. The United States and Netherlands contended that Ministers already had tacitly agreed to not holding an NRC until Russia implements the six-point plan, since no Minister contradicted the SYG on this proposal and the SYG already publicly announced this position. Italy wanted to keep the dialogue open, but only after the Russians withdraw. Canada, in an apparent attempt to deflect calls for a meeting of the NRC, asked for the OSCE to brief the NAC to provide its assessment of the degree of Russian compliance with the 6-point plan. The Canadian also called for NATO to examine its cooperation with Russia in a comprehensive manner so that ratcheting back on cooperation does not take place just on a piecemeal basis.

Ukraine

¶10. (C) DSYG Bisogniero indicated Ukraine,s preference for Deputy Foreign Minister Konstyantyn Yeliseyev to visit Brussels for a special session of the NATO Ukraine Commission on August 27 at 15:00. Bisogniero noted Allies had wanted to meet earlier in the week and said he would confirm the time to PermReps as soon as possible. The DSYG, noting that the NAC had still not decided on the possibility of a NUC or NRC meeting at the October Defense Ministerial in Budapest, suggested the NAC defer a decision until early September.

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This would allow time for Allies to hear Ukraine,s opinion at an August 27 special session of the NUC, as well as to assess Russia,s behavior in the coming days. He indicated that the Budapest organizers could easily accommodate an expanded schedule should these meetings be added. Romanian PermRep Ducaru suggested that a Defense ministers, meeting of the new NATO-Georgia Council should be considered. The United States supported him in this idea.

Afghanistan Issues

¶11. (C/NF) ISAF SECURITY SITUATION: Admiral Di Paloa, Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC), updated the Council on the recent attack in Surobi that left 10 French soldiers dead and 21 wounded. The battle lasted for hours and included close air support from fighters and attack helicopters. He noted that this was in a district that was previously quiet but recently had seen a decrease in support for ISAF and the Afghan government. He also noted an increase in OMF support from Pakistan and promised to monitor any changes in OMF tactics.

¶12. (C/NF) PAKISTAN: MG Li Gobbi, Assistant Director of Ops Division, informed the Council that the resignation of President Musharraf may weaken the fight against extremists and invigorate the OMF. He noted that the Pakistan military was preparing for actions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Taliban had declared &open war8 against the Pakistani military in the tribal areas. The Deputy Secretary General (DSYG) noted challenges the Pakistani government faces will be significant, and also highlighted the Tripartite Commission meeting with Pakistan General Kayani this week.

¶13. (C/NF) ISAF OPERATIONS: MG Li Gobbi informed the Allies that COMISAF had elevated the force protection condition to the highest level due to the recent attacks in Khowst and Surobi. Highway security is the number highest priority. In Regional Command North, there has been a recent increase in rocket attacks and the main effort is concentrated in the Pol-e-Komri and Kunduz areas, where 80% of attacks have occurred. In Regional Command West, attacks on Highway 1

were the most significant and the main effort is on transferring a new forward operating base to the Afghan National Army (ANA). In Regional Command South, northern Helmand and Kandahar provinces remain very active, with most coalition operations occurring in Garmsir and Maywand Districts. In Regional Command East, operations remain focused on ensuring freedom of movement along Highway 1, as well as on the Khowst-Gardez road. In Regional Command Capital, increased security presence during the Independence Day activities prevented major attacks in Kabul City.

¶14. (C/NF) DISCUSSION: Many PermReps requested further analysis of OMF strategy in light of the increase in size and organization of recent attacks. Several proposed a half-day or more of meetings to review OMF strategy and NATO's responses. Others noted the Surobi attack may impact the proposed transfer of security for the capital area. AMB Volker noted that it is important to determine if this is a single action or a shift in strategy. He also noted this emphasizes the importance of ANA expansion. The CMC stated that the International Staff is preparing an update on the profile, strategy and capabilities of the OMF to be briefed in September, along with the implications of ANA expansion. The DSYG agreed with the need for further discussion and also noted that he is concerned with the potential decrease in Afghan public support for ISAF and the Afghan government.

Kosovo

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¶15. (C) Kosovo Update: DSYG informed Allies that UNMIK on 18 August 2008 signed an agreement to transfer assets to EULEX. DSYG warned that the one month delay in reaching this agreement could affect the timely deployment of EULEX and that KFOR would need to monitor the situation. Major General Li Gobbi, Assistant Director of the International Military Staff, Operations Division, reported that the security situation remained relatively calm and that there had not yet been any negative Serbian reaction to UNMIK steps toward re-establishing customs at Gates 1 and 31. KFOR has forces at each gate ready to respond.

¶16. (C) MG Li Gobbi warned that a shortfall in pledged manpower and funds for the new tasks of demobilizing the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) and standing up the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) was impeding KFOR's ability to meet mission timelines. In response, Canada announced that it would be returning to KFOR after several years absence, contributing five personnel.

Other Topics

¶17. (C) Support to the African Union: The D/SYG announced that DSG(2008)0628(INV), the AU's request for continued airlift support to AMISOM, passed silence on August 11. This measure authorizes a six-month extension of NATO's airlift support to AMISOM until February 21, 2009. The D/SYG made no further substantive comments; Allies also raised no comments.

¶18. (C) Response to Terrorism: Spanish PermRep Benavides mentioned that in light of Tuesday's difficult day in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Allies should also note the occurrence of a second terrorist attack in Algeria which killed 17 people. He asked if the Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit (TTIU) could provide an initial report on what happened in Algeria, given its importance to NATO as a Med-D partner. The D/SYG promised to follow up on Spain's inquiry; no other comments were offered.

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